

Ben Ingersent

Skill: Joinery

From: Somerset
Competed in: WorldSkills 2007, Shizuoka
Employer: Donovan Joinery and Kitchens
Result: Medallion for Excellence

Qualifications

- 7 GCSE's
- NVQ Art & Design – Distinction (2 A's)
- NVQ Level 2 – Site Carpentry (City & Guilds)
- NVQ Level 3 – Bench Joinery (City & Guilds)
- LCGI Senior Award (achieved through competing)



Ben has always wanted to work with his hands and soon found that his passion lay in joinery. Two years ago he discovered the World of competitions and then swiftly found himself as a member of Team UK, headed to Japan, to compete in the Joinery competition at WorldSkills 2007.

How did Ben discover competitions?

Well, this was with the help of his college lecturers. Impressed with his ability in Joinery, they entered him into a regional SkillBuild heat. He did so well in that, that he went on to win the National SkillBuild Finals in 2005 and 2006. Ben says "Competing was a bit nerve racking to begin with but it also gave me such a buzz at the same time. I was up against other really good joiners. I soon got used to the pressure and started to enjoy the competitions more and more."

So WorldSkills was something Ben wanted to go for?

After winning the national competitions it was clear that Ben would make an ideal WorldSkills candidate, but he still had to prove it to UK Skills. He competed at the UK WorldSkills

selection event and was finally told that he'd won his place on the team. "It was a great feeling to get the opportunity to represent my country, and a relief that all the training so far had been worth it."

How did Ben cope with the training?

Training was quite intense at times. Ben had help from both his employers and his training manager. "The projects I was set were always interesting and challenging but it's hard to get used to being timed and marked for your work. Everything came under close scrutiny from my training manager, which felt horrible at the time but was actually a real benefit, because I got to learn what was right and wrong and what gets you to a World class level."

"What's always excited me about my work is being able to take pride in every piece I create. Sometimes the pieces are quite personal, and when you are being marked on that, it makes it quite difficult to deal with."

So what was competing in Japan like?

Ben admits that competing at such a large scale competition was completely different to what he expected. "I found it hard at times to stay focused because the event is so huge. There are hundreds of people watching you and you look around and realise that you are up against the best in the World." But all Ben's hard work paid off, as he was awarded a Medallion for Excellence.

Was Ben happy to get home to the UK?

Ben was delighted to see his family and friends again, but he also felt a bit lost. As he says "I had so much spare time on my hands, it was weird not having to train and not having Japan to look forward to anymore. Although having said that I made good use of my bed to catch up on the sleep I'd missed!"

Does Ben think competing at WorldSkills was worthwhile? Ben definitely thinks so.

"I feel a lot more confident in my work now. Competitions are a great way for young people to challenge themselves to be better. You learn more about your industry and the skills you need to be the best you can. WorldSkills provides a great platform to compete against the best in the World and there's no greater challenge than that."

And is work going well?

"Since coming back my work rate has picked up. This will start to improve my company's turnover and in a way I'm starting to pay them back for their investment in me, which I'm really pleased about." Ben knows he's lucky though. "Lots of people are stuck in jobs which they don't enjoy, but I'm the opposite. I enjoy so much of what my job entails, I can't imagine doing anything else."

So, what advice would Ben give to others wanting to take part?

"You have to be committed to carry out the training and be willing to try out and learn new things. Most of all, if you get the opportunity, go for it and enjoy the experience."

And what will Ben remember most about his time at WorldSkills?

For Ben there are too many good memories to choose from.

"Going to Japan in the first place was amazing. Being met with the sight of Mount Fuji on our first morning was awesome. I just had to stand and stare at it for a couple of minutes to take it in. That's when I realised where I was and it all started to sink in. I realised what I'd already actually achieved to get there and that I was part of something really important."

A word with his employer: Glen Donovan, Owner, Donovan Joinery & Kitchens

Donovan Joinery & Kitchen's have been involved in the world of competitions since they first took Ben on some five years ago. When his college entered him into his first competition, Glen and his team were only too happy to help supply him with the tools and the time off he needed to prepare.

As a small company is it hard to support a competitor?

Glen says yes, but it has its benefits too. "Ben's training was very demanding. It meant Ben had to take large blocks of time off work, which for a small company can be hard to swallow financially. But we knew that the advantages that both us as a company and Ben as an individual got, outweighed any negative points hands down."

So what would Glen say are the benefits? Well, there are a number of them.

"Having Ben compete at WorldSkills created a lot of coverage in the local and national media, which obviously created some good attention for Donovan Joinery. Training's given Ben excellent skills and practice that he wouldn't have received as quickly at college, which obviously helps us when he is working as part of our team. As a testament to that, Ben now plays a strong role in the company."

And his advice for other companies thinking of getting involved?

"For small companies especially, supporting an employee through the training needed can be hard work, but I think you have to keep in mind that the benefits are certainly worth it at the end of the day."



For more information, please contact the PR Team, UK Skills: 020 7612 9260